

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION USNATO
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 4414

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, NO, SV, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIET RADAR EQUIPMENT AT BARENTSBURG

REF: OSLO 4264 (NOTAL

1. THE GON, WHICH HAD BEEN QUICK TO CRITICIZE THE USSR
FOR PLACING RADAR EQUIPMENT AT THE BARENTSBURG (SVALBARD)
HELIPORT, HAS NOW TAKEN STEPS TO PLAY DOWN THAT ISSUE.
JUSTICE MINISTER VALLE, WHO ALONG WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
FRYDENLUND, HAD PUBLICLY LABELED THE RADAR A VIOLATION
OF NORWEGIAN LAW, NOW SAYS THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE
GON WILL ASK THE SOVIETS TO REMOVE THE EQUIPMENT.

2. MINISTER VALLE STATED SEPT 5 THAT "IT IS NOT IN-
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CONCEIVABLE THAT IF THE RUSSIANS HAD APPLIED FOR
PERMISSION TO SET UP THE RADAR, SUCH PERMISSION WOULD
HAVE BEEN GRANTED." SHE ALSO STATED THAT SHE WOULD
NOT VISIT THE HELIPORT SITE DURING HER FORTHCOMING
VISIT TO SVALBARD.

3. THE SOVIET RADAR EQUIPMENT BECAME AN ISSUE BECAUSE

OF A SENSATIONALIZED ARTICLE IN NORDLYS, A TROMSO NEWSPAPER. THIS PUBLICITY, IN TURN, LED TO A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE SOVIET HELIPORT AND GENERAL USSR BEHAVIOR ON SVALBARD. THE NEWS OF THE SOVIET MILITARY AIR CRASH AT HOPEN ISLAND ALSO SERVED TO HEIGHTEN INTEREST IN QUESTIONS OF NORWEGIAN SOVEREIGNTY AND SOVIET BEHAVIOR ON SVALBARD.

4. MFA POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR CHRISTIANSEN, IN SEPTEMBER 6 CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, DESCRIBED THE BARENTSBURG RADAR AS A POTENTIALLY MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM THAN THE MUCH PUBLICIZED AIR CRASH AT HOPEN. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE USSR COULD BE EXPECTED TO CLAIM THE RIGHT TO EMPLOY RADAR, AND INDEED TO OPERATE A LARGE HELIPORT, AS PART OF THEIR TREATY RIGHTS TO CONDUCT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY ON SVALBARD. HE ALSO SAID THAT GON AUTHORITIES HAVE, AFTER LOOKING AT THE EQUIPMENT, BEEN SATISFIED THAT IT WAS OF LIMITED CAPACITY (100 KM) AND INTENDED ONLY FOR GROUND CONTROL PURPOSES.

4. CHRISTIANSEN ALSO STATED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE, BUT NOT FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, THAT THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAD, IN 1974, MADE APPLICATION FOR CERTAIN BROADCAST FREQUENCIES THAT MIGHT, IN FACT, HAVE BEEN MADE IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENTLY NOTED RADAR EQUIPMENT.

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6. THE QUESTION OF THE LEGALITY OF THE HELIPORT ITSELF, HOWEVER, HAS NOW BEEN RAISED ANEW BY THE PRESS. (POSSIBLY TRIGGERED BY FRYDENLUND'S SEPT 1 REFERENCE TO THE BASE IN AN INTERVIEW AS BEING CONTRARY TO NORWEGIAN REGULATIONS.) IN THIS REGARD, MFA OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE SOVIETS DID NOTIFY NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES OF THEIR PLANS FOR THE CURRENT EXPANSION OF THE LANDING AREA. THEY ARE NOT, HOWEVER, CERTAIN AS TO WHETHER THE SOVIETS COMMUNICATED SIMILARLY REGARDING THE INITIAL CONSTRUCTION ON THE BASE SOME YEARS AGO.

7. COMMENT: THE GON CAN BE EXPECTED TO PURSUE THE RADAR MATTER LARGELY TO THE EXTENT THAT PRESS AND/OR PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURE MAKES IT NECESSARY. THE UNCERTAIN LEGAL POSITION AND THE SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS NATURE OF THE EQUIPMENT MAKE THE EARLIER GON STATEMENTS ON THIS MATTER SOMEWHAT EMBARRASING. THE RADAR QUESTION, HOWEVER, HAS FOCUSED SUBSTANTIAL PUBLIC OPINION ON THE LEGALITY OF THE HELIPORT ITSELF. MFA OFFICIALS APPEAR TO VIEW THE HELIPORT AS AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT WHICH IS NOT NOW GOING TO BE UNDONE BY ANY NORWEGIAN-SOVIET DISCUSSION OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SVALBARD TREATY CLAUSES REGARDING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

THEY APPEAR TO VIEW THE HELIPORT AND THE RADAR QUESTIONS
AS POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS TO THE SOLUTION OF SUCH LARGER
PROBLEMS AS THE SVABLARD FISHERIES PROTECTION ZONE
AND THE BOUNDARY MATTER.
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